

PRESS RELEASE

Congressman John Conyers, Jr.

Fourteenth District, Michigan
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary
Dean, Congressional Black Caucus

FOR RELEASE:
May 4, 2004

CONTACT: Dena Graziano
202-226-6888

CONYERS PRAISES NEW IMMIGRATION BILL THAT BENEFITS IMMIGRANTS AND PROTECTS WORKING AMERICANS

Congressman John Conyers, Jr., issued the following statement at a press conference today to introduce new comprehensive immigration reform legislation:

“I am proud to stand here today with my colleagues in the House and Senate and with representatives of the labor movement and immigrant rights advocates. It is no small feat for us all to stand here shoulder to shoulder in support of one bill that will both benefit immigrants and protect the rights and jobs of working Americans.

We are joined here today because we are aware that our immigration system is riddled with problems. Our current immigration policies have failed the estimated 10 million undocumented people living and working in the U.S., the thousands of people caught in the family backlogs, and those wishing to immigrate legally to the U.S. And usually forgotten in this debate, the American workforce has been harmed by the failure of our immigration policy as well. Any reform of our immigration system must consider both the immigrants wishing to make a better life here in our country and Americans who are struggling to maintain their quality of life.

We cannot deny that the failure of our immigration policy does have a significant impact on American workers, and sometimes that impact is not always positive. For instance, American employers take advantage of the plight of undocumented workers to lower wages and reduce employee protections. And, historically, guest worker programs have resulted in exploitation of foreign workers and denial of opportunities and wage depression for domestic workers.

However, these problems will not be solved by closing our doors to those searching for a better life in our country. The fault lies not with immigrants. It lies with a system that fails to hold American employers accountable for abuses and fails to provide avenues to legalization for millions of immigrants working in this country.

With today’s introduction of meaningful comprehensive immigration reform, we are calling for an end to misguided legislative quick-fixes that have only further harmed immigrants and American workers. Our legislation holds businesses accountable by imposing clear employment guidelines and ensuring immigrant workers have the right to organize, receive benefits, and fair pay. And equally important, this bill provides a remedy for the millions of undocumented workers and their families who have worked hard and contributed to their communities. It reduces family reunification backlogs, and creates an orderly system of immigration for those wishing to permanently immigrate to the United States.

The bill we are introducing today is an important step in fixing our immigration system. This bill is not a blanket amnesty. It does not put immigrants ahead of hard working Americans. It has strong and fair provisions to let deserving people into our country and to keep out those who wish to do us harm. By creating a fair system based on family and employment-based immigration, this bill provides the comprehensive changes our immigration laws so desperately need.”

##JUD-018-05/04/04##